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ABSTRACT

This publication is designed to assist early childhood providers, cooks, and parents in hygienic food preparation and a healthy diet provision for young children in Australian child care. The guide recommends nutritional requirements for children, using the five food groups as a guide for meal planning. The Australian dietary guidelines are also outlined. Also discussed are: (1) food storage after purchase and in the refrigerator, the cupboard, and in children's packed lunches; (2) hygienic food preparation procedures; (3) mealtime routines and the importance of consistency and flexibility to allow for individual needs; and (4) use of small groups, the mealtime environment, and outdoor meals. The guide recommends the use of mealtimes to broaden children's perception of different cultures, and includes sample recipes of food eaten in different countries. Also outlined are: developmental guidelines regarding feeding oneself and utensil use; food presentation guidelines which include variety, flavor, texture, and size issues; and day care accommodations for breastfeeding, bottle feeding, and cleaning recommendations. A checklist is included to allow readers to assess their center's with regard to nutrition and hygiene. contains a 14-item bibliography. (KDFB)

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Thought for food

A starting point for children's nutritional meals

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Thought for food

Debbie Nicol

Foreword

Thinking about what is done and why, about whether it can be done better and how, is a process which is at the heart of improved practice in child care no less than in any other field.

The Accreditation and Beyond Series supports that process in practical way.

Each of the books in the series puts ideas about good practice up against the understandings about children and their needs on which they are based. This is done deliberately. There are no recipes for good practice. There are, however, principles that can be used as a benchmark for deciding whether what is being done is good for children and the people who work with them. Many of these are drawn out in this series.

The impetus for the series was to provide practical support to services participating in the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System. However, it is also intended that the series be an ongoing reference for early childhood professionals and services working to provide quality care for children.

It is not meant to be a final statement on any of the areas it covers and the range and depth of the series is deliberately diverse as is the child care sector.

Thought for food: A starting point for children's nutritional meals provides a starting point for understanding what is needed to ensure hygienic food preparation and a healthy diet for children in long day care. It sets out basic information about hygienic food preparation practices and nutrition and provides an extended bibliography.

Other titles in the series are:

- Staff–Child interactions: A Vygotskian perspective;
- Babies need more than minding: Planning programs for babies and toddlers in group settings;
- The very best of care and education: Many ways to the Quality Improvement & Accreditation System;
- Surviving Accreditation: A QIAS ideas bank;
- The policy handbook: Developing policies in child care; and
- Highlighting health: A discussion of health practices and accreditation.

AECA hopes that these books will assist in making the accreditation experience rich, constructive and successful, and that the series will be an ongoing resource to services.

Tonia Godhard
President

For their contributions

Claire Bell, Leslie Ralph and Elizabeth Dean.

Photographs: Bruce Children's Centre and Andrew Sikorski.

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Introduction

This book has been designed to be read by everyone caring for children. The importance of child care staff, cooks, and parents in providing children with a healthy balanced diet and a comfortable, safe, and hygienic environment for meals cannot be underestimated.

Nutritional requirements

Children's eating habits are established during early childhood. Children need a well-balanced diet using the five food groups:

1. Bread and Cereals
2. Fruit and Vegetables
3. Meat and Meat Alternatives
4. Milk and Dairy Foods
5. Fats

Vital nutrients, a balanced diet, and a healthy physical and emotional development are provided when the five groups are used as a guide for planning meals for children.

Bread and Cereals provide nutrients required for the body's fuel and energy. They include carbohydrates, vitamin B, fibre, and protein. At least four servings of bread and cereals are required per day. For example, one serve equals one slice of bread, half a cup of cereal, two Weetbix or half a cup of cooked rice or noodles.

Fruit and Vegetables provide nutrients for body repair and maintenance of good health. They include vitamin A&C, folic acid, carbohydrates, and energy. At least four servings of fruit and vegetables per day are required, including one serve of vegetables rich in vitamin C (e.g. tomatoes, carrots). One serve is equal to either half a cup of fruit salad, three to four pieces of dried fruit and half a cup of fruit juice, three-quarters of a cup of cooked vegetables, one average potato, or one raw carrot.

(Note: It is recommended that 100 per cent fruit juices be diluted with fresh water at a ratio of 50:50 to prevent decay of children's teeth by the natural sugars in the juice.)

Meat and Meat Alternatives provide nutrients for the building and repair of body muscle and body tissue. They include protein, iron, vitamin B, and zinc. At least one serve of meat or meat equivalent is required per day. One serve equals 50g of meat, seafood, or chicken; one egg; three-quarters of a cup of cooked lentils; and four tablespoons of peanut butter.

Milk and Dairy Foods provide nutrients required for the growth and maintenance of bones and teeth. They include calcium, protein, vitamin B, and vitamin A&D. The serves per day should be equivalent to 600–900mLs of milk and include one glass of milk, one tub of yoghurt, or one slice of cheese.

Note: Full cream milk is recommended for children under the age of five, as they need the fat and energy content for growth and development. However, children on a well-balanced, varied diet can be introduced to reduced fat milk after the age of two, skim milk and low-fat are not recommended.

Fats are a source of vitamins, especially fat-soluble vitamins (e.g. vitamins A, D & E). 15–30g per day is recommended.

Children require 50 per cent of the recommended daily intake during the time they are in care, especially long day care.

Australian dietary guidelines

The Australian Dietary Guidelines for Australians (1993) is a useful reference for parents, carers, and cooks.
Eight of the principles are:

1. Enjoy a wide range of nutritious foods.

A variety and balance of foods from the five food groups are important. Following the recommended daily intake of the five food groups will ensure a balanced intake of nutrients.

2. Eat lots of bread, cereals, vegetables, and fruit.

Wholegrain products are preferable, as wholemeal provides more fibre, minerals, and vitamins. The different types of dietary fibre in breads, cereals, vegetables, and fruit help prevent constipation.

3. Avoid saturated fats.

There are three types of fats: Saturated — found mostly in meat and dairy products; monounsaturated — found in oils such as canola and olive; polyunsaturated fats — mainly from plant seeds such as sunflower, safflower, and soybean.

Saturated fats, unlike polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats, have a tendency to increase blood cholesterol levels.

4. Avoid high-sugar in foods.

Avoid foods high in sugars, as these often have little vitamin or minerals content and are high in fat and low in fibre (e.g. chocolate and processed foods). Choose foods with no added sugars (e.g.unsweetened yoghurt, banana).

5. Limit salt.

Avoid adding salt to food while cooking. Avoid high-salt foods such as chips, sausages, and packet soups.

6. Encourage and support breastfeeding.

Breast milk is the most suitable form of nutrition for babies, particularly in the first six months of life. Natural antibodies are present, there is less chance of allergies developing, and it is the right temperature.

7. Eat foods containing calcium.

Calcium is important for the development of teeth and bones. Sources of calcium include milk, eggs, cheese, yoghurt. Secondary sources are salmon, tuna if the bones are eaten, and (to a lesser extent) dried apricots.

8. Eat foods containing iron.

Iron is required for the transportation of oxygen in the blood. Good sources of iron include red meat, eggs, and a secondary source is chicken, and certain vegetables.

Water

Water is an important factor in nutrition. Seventy per cent of a child's body weight is water. When calculating a child's water requirements, you need to take his/her weight into account. It is important that water is readily available and offered to children frequently. It is particularly important in hot conditions and when a child is ill, especially when suffering vomiting and/or diarrhoea. However children need at least four glasses or more of water a day.

How to store food

It is important to store food properly to retain its nutritional value and prevent spoilage. Food needs to be stored in the refrigerator as soon as possible after being purchased. Foods kept in warm areas such as kitchen benches and car boots will reduce their freshness and nutritional quality.

Purchasing food

When purchasing food for a child care centre, consideration needs to be given to the condition and transportation of the items.

1. Buy foods that are not damaged. Lookout for such things as damaged cans, broken seals, bruised fruit and vegetables, and out-of-date stock.
2. When packing food, keep frozen items separate from those unfrozen.
3. Meat and chicken should be packed separately to avoid contamination.
4. Poisonous items such as disinfectants and cleaning agents also need to be packed separately.
5. Transportation of foods must be fast. Frozen foods must be kept below 4 °C. Buy frozen foods last.
6. Unpack frozen foods first to avoid defrosting.

Storage of foods

Refrigerator:

When storing foods in the refrigerator, place the items on the inside shelves in the refrigerator rather than those on the door. This will help prevent spoilage of foods through frequent opening of the door. This is of particular importance where high-risk foods are involved.

High-risk foods include:

- *meat* (including casseroles, stews, roasts, cold meats such as ham, devon, and salami) and *poultry*;
- *fish*;
- *eggs* (including mayonaisse and desserts based on eggs);
- *cream* (including cream desserts and mornays);
- *cooked rice and pasta.*

(Further information on high-risk foods can be obtained from your local Public and Environmental Health Service.)

- If large portions of food are being prepared (e.g. spaghetti bolognaise) the food should be put into two containers so it will cool rapidly in the refrigerator and prevent the risk of food poisoning.
- Frozen foods should be kept below 4°C.
- Hot foods should be kept hot at 60°C or above.
- Foods should be stored in airtight, sealable containers.
- Store raw foods away from cooked or ready-to-eat foods, preferably on different shelves.

- Store cooked meat above raw meat to prevent contamination by raw meat fluids.
- Storage containers must be well-sealed.
- The use of greaseproof paper, foil, and polythene wrap around foods will prevent loss of moisture and contamination by flavours and odours.

Cupboard shelves:

Regularly rotate food stored on shelves. Put new stock at the back and bring old stock forward.

Store cleaners and poisons away from edible food, preferably in locked, child-proof cupboard.

Clean shelves regularly.

Children's packed lunches:

Parents need to be aware that certain foods in packed lunches are at risk of contamination by bacteria and need to be refrigerated. These include meat and chicken, egg products (e.g. mayonnaise), cream products, pasta, and rice. Leftover foods from the night before are also at risk of contamination, yet these are particularly common foods given to infants and toddlers for their lunches. Refrigeration of such lunches is essential.

It is sometimes difficult for staff to be aware of what children in their care eat at mealtime. When children bring their own food and drink, the following suggestions will help:

- Give parents a list of food products which need to be refrigerated. If these items are in the children's lunches, ask the parents to either put them in the refrigerator on arrival or write on the lunch box that the food requires refrigeration.
- Give parents a list of alternative sandwich fillings to those commonly used, e.g. peanut butter and Vegemite.

Hygiene

All child care centres must remember that hygiene is of the utmost importance. Avoid:

- coughing and sneezing on food;
- long fingernails;
- jewellery such as rings and bracelets which make it difficult to put on and take off disposable gloves;
- touching nose, mouth, and ears when in contact with preparation and presentation of foods;
- smoking near kitchens even if smoking is permitted outdoors; and
- animals in the kitchen.

Food preparation

The first step in food preparation is handwashing. Staff must wash their hands thoroughly

- before wiping tables;
- before setting tables;
- before, during, and after preparing food; and
- before and after assisting children at mealtimes.

Washing hands correctly includes:

- using soap (preferably liquid);
- using running water (warm);
- friction washing of all parts of the hands, including the backs, between fingers, and under nails;
- drying properly on a paper towel and turning tap off with the paper towel; and
- disposing of used paper into lined bin with a lid.

When handling food, the use of disposable gloves needs to be considered. Gloves are absolutely essential if the food handler has cuts and abrasions on hands. The use of tongs is also essential. (Even when using tongs and or gloves, handwashing is still of the utmost importance.)

The risk of contamination to food is reduced when food handlers wash hands between handling frozen and unfrozen foods.

Food should not be handled by people who are, or have been, ill with diarrhoea. Staff members whose duties include changing nappies and/or toileting children should not prepare or serve foods.

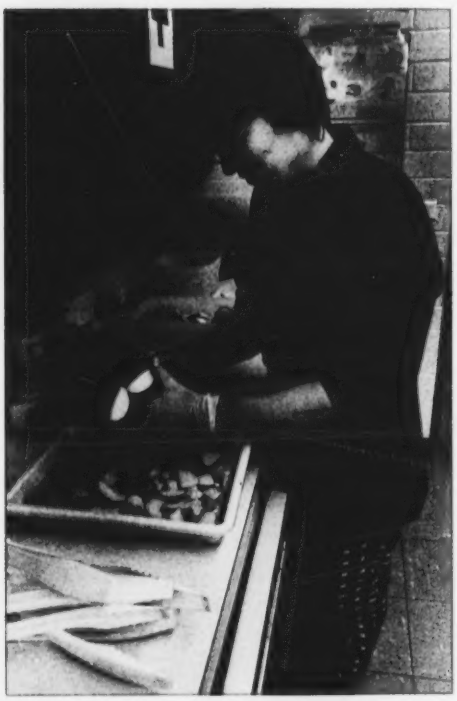
The use of plastic chopping boards is recommended because they are easy to wash. A separate board for cooked and raw foods is essential. The boards need to be clearly marked so as not to be used for the wrong type of food. Particular care must be taken when using raw meat and

chicken. The board needs to be washed thoroughly between and after use.

Temperatures between 4° and 60°C are ideal for the growth of bacteria, therefore foods need to be kept below or above this temperature range. Food needs to be served hot or cold. When food has been cooked and is to be stored in the refrigerator, DO NOT wait for the food to cool down. It must be put in the refrigerator straight away so not to fall within the temperature range of 4°–60°C. Today's refrigerators are able to cope with hot foods being placed in them.

Frozen foods (including chickens) are best thawed in the refrigerator on a plate big enough to prevent any drips of liquid onto other foods. The food can also be thawed in a microwave. Foods should NOT be kept at room temperature for more than two hours. The rise of temperature over time increases the chance of bacteria growth in the foods.

Aprons and/or tea towels used by cooks or food handlers need to be washed daily. It is preferable, however, to air-dry cooking equipment and utensils after washing rather than drying with tea towels; this reduces the risk of contamination of utensils with bacteria. The use of a dishwasher reduces the risk of contamination even further.



Recognition of food poisoning

Symptoms of food poisoning depend greatly on the individual and the type of bacteria. Symptoms usually occur within 6–24 hours.

Symptoms include

- vomiting
- diarrhoea
- abdominal pains, cramps
- nausea.

Mealtimes

Mealtimes are an important daily routine in child care. The environment needs to be comfortable, relaxed, and pleasant. This will help enhance the children's learning and social skills.

The mealtime needs to be consistent and regular but also sufficiently flexible to allow for individual children's needs. A child may be too tired to eat and need to go to bed, so his/her meal needs to be delayed until the child wakes.

Small groups

Ideally, children should sit in small groups at meal time; 6-8 children with a child care person. Social skills and decision making skills can also be enhanced with small groups, as the children are able to discuss the day's events with less distraction. Lunchtime may be between 11.30 a.m. and 1.30 p.m. Such a schedule also allows for the children's different times of arrival at the centre and program flexibility.

Meal environment

Appropriate size table and chairs enhance the children's comfort at mealtime. Children need to be able to sit comfortably at the table, with feet flat on the floor and knees not touching the table. Positioning tables away from fire exits and major walkways is important so that there is easy access around all sides.

Space is an important consideration when setting up for meals. Six to eight children and a child care person allows for supervision and conversation within the group without too much disruption. The child carer has the opportunity to eat lunch with the children and act as a role model.

A scrap bucket, tray, and utensil holder should be nearby. As children finish their food, they can be guided to scrape uneaten food into the bin, and to stack plates, forks, and spoons. Disposing of uneaten food is essential. It should NOT be returned to the children's lunch boxes (when child brings their own food and drink). This procedure will help decrease the risk of contamination of foods. A written record of food eaten by infants and toddlers is necessary to give parents information on their child's eating pattern.

Avoid allowing children to eat out of their lunch boxes; a homelike environment is conducive to good eating habits. Vitrified crockery and toughened glass is recommended because of the ease of cleaning and durability. Plastic utensils do not wear well; they are often scratched and furred, and are difficult to clean properly.

The cleaning of tables and chairs before and after meals requires the use of hot soapy water.

Tablecloths are not recommended, because of the risk of children pulling at the tablecloth. Place mats are preferred. Easy-care fabrics, such as seersucker, are easy to machine-wash and do not require

ironing. Place mats need to be disinfected and washed daily.

Children who assist with meal presentation before eating must first wash and dry their hands properly.

It may be necessary to ask children if they need to go to the toilet before sitting down to their meal. This will avoid mishaps and embarrassment to the children.

A centrepiece on the table will add to the attractive atmosphere, but you must ensure that the centrepiece is not so high as to tip over. If using flowers to decorate the table, ensure that they are non-poisonous and that no child is likely to suffer from an allergic reaction.

Independence can be encouraged with the use of small jugs from which the children can pour their own drinks. (Use clear-material jugs which allow the children to see the level without tipping. The colour of the drink also adds to the aesthetics. Ensure food colourings will not cause an allergic reaction). Children should be encouraged to select their own food. (Minimum handling of food by staff and children will also decrease the risk of the spread of infectious diseases.)

Children should not have to wait when they sit down to eat. Nor should children have to wait until every child has finished at the table. Some children eat quickly, others slowly. It could take 15 minutes or 45 minutes. Plan activities for those children who finish their meals quickly. Encourage children to eat their meals at their own pace. Mealtime is a learning experience and should not be looked upon as a 15–minute exercise before bed or rest. Mealtime is an individual experience, and respecting this is important. Children should not be forced to eat all their food, either through bribery or punishment.

Meals outdoors

Some aspects to be considered when setting up for meals outdoors:

1. Where are the table and chairs situated ? Well-shaded areas will be required throughout the year; cloudy days are no protection from harmful UV rays.
2. The use of sun screen and hats may be required, depending on the UV protection given by the shaded covering.
3. The furniture, especially if left outdoors for extended periods, and fixed equipment must be checked for spiders and insects.
4. The outdoor area must be swept before mealtimes.
5. Position tables and chairs away from traffic areas and allow easy access around all tables.
6. A stable surface is necessary for positioning the furniture.

Cultural aspect

Mealtimes can be a way of broadening children's perception of different cultures. Experience of different foods and cooking and eating utensils helps children to appreciate various cultures and broadens their knowledge. The opportunity for parents to contribute recipes and cook with the children is a valuable learning experience for all.

The use of cooking and eating utensils such as woks and chopsticks — as well as posters, pictures, puzzles, and play equipment — are ideal ways to nurture a child's appreciation of other cultures.

Respecting other cultures' perspective of foods is also important. Children playing with foods such as rice and pasta may be offensive to people within cultures where these foods are a major item in their diet. (Talk with parents about food activities so an offence does not occur.)

Anti Bias Curriculum Tools for Empowering Young Children (1991) discusses stereotyping:

> *Don't stereotype: For example, if you cook black-eyed peas, emphasise that 'this is one of the things Selena eats at home with her family — one of the foods some black people eat.' Do not say, 'This is what black people eat.' If other children from the same group eat differently from each other, point that out.*

There are many basic foods, such as bread, from different cultures that we can introduce to children. Breads include bagels (Jewish), croissants (French), Irish soda bread, muffins, pita (Middle Eastern), and pumpkin bread.

Recipes

The following recipes have been chosen as examples of foods eaten in different countries. The average proportions are given for a *cooking experience* for the children and an opportunity for them to taste the various types of foods available (e.g. Spanish, Indian, Mexican). For further recipes, refer to your local Multicultural Children's Service and Resource Centre.

Spanish Orange Muffins (Madalena)

Ingredients

2 cups SR flour
three-quarters of a cup white sugar
3 eggs
3–4 oranges
half a cup olive oil
half a cup sultanas

Method

Mix all dry ingredients.
Add beaten eggs and oil.
Squeeze juice from oranges and add to mixture.
Mix well to smooth.
Add sultanas.
Pour mixture into patty pans and bake for about 15 minutes in a moderate oven.

Mexican Omelette

Ingredients

2 eggs
one-quarter of an onion, finely chopped
one-quarter of a tomato, finely chopped
1 green pepper, diced
1 tablespoon chopped coriander (optional)
salt, pepper
margarine

Method

Melt margarine in pan.
Add onion, tomato, and pepper.
Add coriander (optional).
Add beaten eggs.
Cook until set.
Can be served with baked beans.

Barfi Balls (East Indian)

Ingredients

half a cup of butter
half a cup of sugar
three-quarters of a cup of milk
2 cups powdered milk
1 cup ground almonds
quarter cup of unsweetened shredded coconut

Method

Melt the butter in a large saucepan over low heat.
Stir in sugar and the liquid milk. Bring to boil and boil hard for five minutes.
Remove from the heat and add the powdered milk. Stir in the almonds and coconut. When cool, form the mixture into balls.
It is important to remember to check for allergies before serving food to children.

Children's development

Developmental aspects of mealtimes need to be considered. Some general guidelines are:

1. Children as young as six months can help feed themselves if given a spoon. When feeding the child, if the child attempts to scoop up the food, the child will develop a skill if given the opportunity.
2. At 12 to 15 months the child will attempt to feed him or herself and more times than not with success.
3. At 18 months the child can successfully feed him or herself with a spoon.
4. At 30 months the child can feed him or herself with a fork.
5. At four years the child can competently cut soft foods.
6. At five years the child can use a knife and fork.

Giving the children the opportunity to help set the table will enhance their self-esteem. This could be implemented with a roster system to ensure all children participate in setting up the mealtime environment (e.g. putting out placemats, crockery, and cutlery, placing the centrepiece on the table, and wiping tables after eating).

Presentation of food

The presentation of food is as important as a pleasant environment.

Considerations include:

Variety

Cook food in a variety of ways. Balance the introduction of new foods with familiar foods, e.g. steamed or stir-fried.

Colour

Use the natural colours of foods to enhance the appearance of the meal. A plate of fruit and vegetables of differing colours — for example, slices of carrot, tomato, lettuce, and capsicum — is much more appealing than mashed-up vegetables. Garnish foods with such things as a slice of cheese, baby tomatoes, sliced capsicum, a sprig of parsley.

Flavour

Combine strong flavours with mild flavours when introducing them. Introduce strong and/or new flavours one at a time, e.g. potato and brocolli.

Texture

Include a variety of food textures (i.e. crisp, smooth, soft, crunchy, hard). Different textures will encourage children to chew, e.g. orange, apple, kiwi fruit or celery.

Size

The size of foods should vary, so cut foods into different sizes. Moderate-size servings are more appealing than overloaded plates.

Breastfeeding

As stated in the *Australian Dietary Guidelines*, breastfeeding needs to be encouraged and supported. It is important that day care staff are aware of the advantages of breastfeeding to both mother and child. Many aspects need to be considered when children in long day care are breastfed. These include support by staff and a suitable environment for the mother and child.

Advantages of breastfeeding include:

- bonding of mother and child;
- natural antibodies in breast milk protect the child from infection;
- fewer allergies are experienced by breastfed children;
- breast milk is easily digestible;
- there is no need to sterilise formulas and bottles; and
- it is inexpensive.

The floor plan of the centre needs to include a private and quiet area for breastfeeding. A comfortable chair is essential. A table would be an added convenience for the mother. Handwashing facilities need to be available.

Another way to support breastfeeding is by having space available in the refrigerator for storing expressed breast milk. There are two ways to store breast milk.

1. Chilled milk: Store expressed milk on the shelves inside the refrigerator, not in its door. The milk must be stored in the refrigerator immediately after expressing. Discard unused expressed milk after 24 hours.

2. Frozen milk: It may sometimes be necessary for frozen breastmilk to be stored in the freezer compartment of a refrigerator at a child care centre. If a mother can foresee a delay in getting to the centre to feed her infant, the provision of facilities for storing breastmilk in the freezer may help reduce the discomfort the mother may experience by not expressing her milk.

STRICT HYGIENE and SAFETY measures are required for the storage of frozen breast milk:

1. Request that breastmilk be frozen in the bottle to be given to the infant.
2. Request that the bottle has name and date on it.
3. Wash hands before collecting the bottle from the freezer.
4. Thaw as descibed below.
5. Give bottle to infant
6. Discard unused breastmilk. Do NOT re-freeze or refrigerate.
7. Rinse bottle.
8. Wash bottle in hot soapy water.

Breast milk stored in the freezer compartment of the refrigerator must be discarded after two weeks. Note that expressed milk will separate into layers and will freeze this way; it is not a sign that the milk is 'off'. Shake the milk when thawed.

Breastmilk is susceptible to bacterial growth, so must be thawed quickly. Do not thaw it in boiling water, as this will curdle the milk. Place the bottle under cold running water and gradually increase the heat of the water as the milk becomes liquid. **Thawed milk must be used within 12 hours and must not be re-frozen.**

To warm expressed breastmilk to body temperature, place it in a jug of *hot water.* Avoid using boiling water. The use of microwaves is not recommended, as there is the risk of the milk burning the child's oesophagus because of uneven heating and the build-up of steam.

Clearly name and date all expressed milk stored in the refrigerator or freezer. Do not give breastmilk to children other than the one for whom it was intended.

For further information on breastfeeding contact your local Nursing Mothers Association (in the white pages under N) and use their booklet on expressing and storing milk.

Bottle feeding (breast milk or formula)

When feeding a child from a bottle there are important points to remember:

1. Wash hands, change nappy and make child comfortable.
2. Wash hands thoroughly.
3. Warm bottle to child's preference.
4. Check milk temperature on inner aspect of wrist (roughly body temperature).
5. Depending on the age of the child, you may like to touch his/her inner cheek to stimulate the rooting reflex (sucking action). The rooting reflex disappears at approximately four-to four-and-a-half months.
6. Tilt bottle so that the teat and the neck of bottle are full of milk at all times.
7. Eye contact and talking to the child throughout the feed are essential.
8. If the bottle is given correctly, there is no need to 'burp' the child, but, if required, do this half-way through the feed or when child's rate of sucking slows.
9. Once the child has finished feeding from the bottle no matter how little milk the child had it must be recorded and then discarded. Do not refrigerate.
10. Remember that all bottles, teats, and caps need to be emptied, washed, and put away immediately after use. Clear labelling will ensure the parents' property is returned and no mix ups occur.

Cleaning bottles

It is essential to clean bottles after each feed.

1. Discard remaining milk.
2. Rinse out the bottle with cold water.
3. Wash the bottle with hot soapy (preferably bio-degradable) water. Use a bottle brush. Also wash teat cover and any other equipment used.
4. Rinse bottle thoroughly.
5. Leave it to air-dry.
6. Once dry, return to child's bag. Remind parents to rewash the bottle with hot soapy water at home.

Sterilising bottles

It is important to know how to correctly prepare chemical solutions used to sterilise bottles for infant milk formula. Teats and/or dummies also need to be sterilised.

1. Hands must be washed thoroughly.
2. Make sure the chemical solution is not past its expiry date.
3. Directions to make up solution must be followed correctly.
4. Equipment to be sterilised must be first washed thoroughly in hot soapy water and rinsed well.
5. Equipment must be immersed in the solution, with no air bubbles present.
6. Note the time the equipment is immersed. Equipment removed from the container under one hour will not have been correctly sterilised.
7. The sterilising equipment should not be placed near direct sunlight, as this will affect the quality of the solution.
8. The sterilising container must have a scalable lid.
9. Before taking equipment out of the solution, hands must be washed.
10. When the equipment has been taken out of the solution, DO NOT rinse it.

Preparing bottles

When preparing artificial feeds, make sure the scoop in the tin of formula remains in that tin. Different brands of artificial formula have different-sized scoops.

It is important to:

- wash hands before preparing equipment;
- prepare all necessary equipment;
- scald metal utensils;
- check formula expiry date;
- follow instructions carefully;
- put measured formula in bottle after water, this gives an accurate measure of water;
- shake bottle to mix well; and
- if the formula is not to be given to child as soon as prepared, store immediately on the shelves in the refrigerator.

Checklist

Use this list to assess your centre in relation to nutrition and hygiene.

		Yes	No
A	A balanced meal is provided. Cultural aspects are considered when planning menus. Children are not forced to eat all food. Children are not bribed to eat their food. Staff at meals are physically at children's level (i.e. sitting). Food has variety of texture, flavour, and colour. Water is available at all times.		
B	Staff wash hands before handling foods. Tables are cleaned before set for meals. Tables are cleaned after use. Floors are swept after meals.		
C	Mothers are supported when continuing breastfeeding. Infant is nursed when given a bottle. Infant formula and breast milk are discarded if not finished. Infants' bottles are rinsed and cleaned. Breastmilk is refrigerated immediately the centre receives it. Formula is refrigerated immediately after receipt.		
D	Children assist with meals. Children wash hands before eating meals. Parents have opportunity to discuss menus.		

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